

# Bullying and Harassment

## What Is It?

Bullying is when one person hurts or threatens someone in their peer group. Anyone can be a bully, and bullying can be carried out in different ways. Physical bullying may include shoving, pushing, and hitting. Words and non-verbal behavior can also be used to hurt someone by spreading rumors, taking part in gossip, or threatening someone with looks, notes, or pictures. Bullies may choose to pick on peers who are smaller or younger than they are, or who are from a different race or culture, or they may pick on someone who is different in some other way.

Bullying might happen once or over and over again. If bullying includes physical or sexual harm or damage to property, makes you feel intimidated or afraid to go to school, or disrupts the regular school day in a threatening way, it is probably also assault or harassment. These behaviors are against school rules and many are also against the law. If a bully attacks you or steals something from you, you can report the incident to the police. You can also report school-related bullying to your school, and you should expect the school to take action to confront the behaviors, discipline the bully, and ensure your safety at school, traveling to and from school, and at school activities. Check with an adult in your school to find out more about your rights.

## If You Are a Victim of Bullying, You Might:

- Feel angry, sad, lonely, or depressed.
- Feel like you have no friends.
- Find that you are getting into fights.
- Want to hurt someone else or yourself.
- Feel like taking steps to defend yourself.
- Feel helpless to stop the bullying.
- Feel hopeless that anything can be done.
- Be afraid to go to school, or feel anxious all the time.
- Feel bad about yourself.

## You're Not Alone

- Almost 30 percent of teens in the United States (or over 5.7 million) are estimated to be involved in bullying as either a bully, a target of bullying, or both.<sup>1</sup>
- 5.4 percent of high school students (about 864,000 teens) report staying home at least one day a month because they fear for their safety.<sup>2</sup>

## Get Help

Being bullied is not your fault, and it is wrong. No matter what you say, how you look, or what you believe, nothing gives anyone else the right to make fun of or hurt you.

- Tell your parents and talk with them about how they can help you be safe.
- Tell a teacher, counselor, or your school's principal. They can take action to stop the bullying.
- Most schools are required to have a policy on bullying. If you feel that nobody in your school is helping you, find out what the policy is, and talk with the principal about how the policy applies to your case.
- If there is no policy in your school, talk with friends, a teacher, or the principal about creating one.

## Help Yourself

You have a right to be safe. There is no one right way to respond to a bully. It is not your fault if a bully continues to pick on you. Do the best you can to cope with bullying while it is happening and get support from adults to help you stay safe and support you emotionally.

## Help Someone Else

If you see bullying happening in your school, you can help put a stop to it.

- Refuse to join in teasing someone.
- Get a teacher, parent, or another adult to come help. You won't be snitching; you'll be taking a stand against bullying.
- Talk to the person being bullied. Tell the person you want to help him or her, and encourage him or her to talk to a supportive adult. Offer to go with the person.
- Report the bullying to an adult you trust.

## If You Want to Read More...

- about crimes that happen in schools, or
- about people being targeted because of their race, national origin, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or disability (hate crimes),

...see our GET HELP series at [www.ncvc.org/gethelp](http://www.ncvc.org/gethelp).

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1 T.R. Nansel et al., "Bullying Behaviors among U.S. Youth: Prevalence and Association with Psychosocial Adjustment," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 285, no.16 (2001): 2094-2100.

2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Surveillance Summaries," *MMWR* 53, no. Ss-2 (2004).